

PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITIES: CELEBRATE YOUR NAMEDAY!

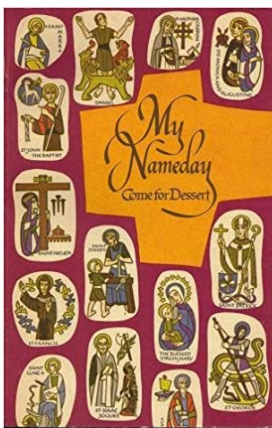
God calls each one by name.

(Is 43:1, Jn 10:3) Everyone's name is sacred and demands respect as a sign of the dignity of the one who bears it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2158) In the last Newsletter we highlighted the great models of charity found in our **Patron Saints**, who lead us to Christ when we are in communion with them.

Every saint has a feast day. A Nameday celebration commemorates the feast day of the saint whose name we received at Baptism. To the church's mind, the day of the saint's death is their feast day because it is their birthday into heaven. To celebrate Nameday then, is to have a kind of faith-filled, special family birthday party each year, in honor of your child's special Patron Saint.



"Namedays enrich a child's thinking and create feelings of security, reverence and love of tradition which comes from links with the past.", Helen McLoughlin tells us, "They bind the members of the family closer to each other, to God and to the saints; they are a means of sanctifying the home, fulfilling the command of the bishops of the United States: Christians must make their homes holy."



In her essay, "My Nameday—Come for Dessert", Helen McLoughlin encourages parents and children to become aware of the mystery of the feast. "Parents must revere and pray to their children's patrons and express love for the heavenly protectors after whom they have named their children by a joyful celebration of the heavenly birthdays of the family patrons."

McLoughlin provides lots of great ideas to celebrate Nameday. Here is a selection of her suggestions for coming to know your family's Patron Saints and making your child's Nameday meaningful and memorable:

- Participate in Mass together as the most important part of the Nameday celebration. "At Mass the family seeks God's graces for the nameday child through the intercession of his patron. They receive God's word, glorify Him and place the child's particular needs at the feet of Providence."
- Plan "a little evening"--a time for a party and a special prayer for the child in the company of friends and family.
 - Keep the party short and snappy: invite no more children than can be comfortably managed.
 - Plan the time so that a few games may be played. Give prizes and end with a quiet game.
 - Invite the participation of both children and adults in preparing and decorating.
 - Include special and fun details and novelties such as colored straws, marshmallows, animal crackers and candies.
- Make a Nameday dessert-- serve the most beautiful cake or pie you know how to make, with punch and special drinks.
- Decorate the dessert and the table with a symbol of the patron saint, use the saint's symbols to decorate napkins and place cards.
- Declare a period of quiet, say a decade or a few prayers of the rosary, listen to a story while cutting out, pasting or coloring decorations. For children, a time of stillness may best be maintained by allowing them to help with a nameday decoration. Silence and handiwork provides the space for the Holy Spirit to work upon their hearts and minds and hands.
- Tell or read about the Patron Saint and his or her holy and virtuous life, the good deeds that were accomplished or one of the stories about their life that inspires awe. Simple, short and illustrated stories work best for young children.

"Namedays like holidays give variety to our years; furthermore, they are a stabilizing influence, bringing the family together and uniting it to the Church. Namedays are a means of strengthening the faith of our children, of drawing them closer to the Communion of Saints. One of the ways to create a supernatural atmosphere in the home and to train our children in the faith is by the celebration of namedays."

This article is based on "My Nameday—Come for Dessert" an essay by Helen McLoughlin